



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Norberto Dueñas

**SUBJECT:** COMMUNITY BUDGET MEETINGS **DATE:** May 29, 2013  
**SUMMARY**

Approved

Date 5/29/13

## BACKGROUND

Throughout the month of May, the Mayor, City Council members, and the City Manager's Office have together coordinated and hosted a series of community budget informational meetings in each of the ten Council Districts. The purpose of these meetings has been to provide residents with information on the City Manager's 2013-2014 Proposed Budget and allow the opportunity to directly ask questions of elected officials and subject matter experts, and provide their advice and perspective. A total of eleven meetings were held, with a much lower attendance in all districts than in previous years. The lower attendance is likely due, at least in part, to the relatively more stable budget outlook this year than in years past.

Each meeting was typically opened by the district Councilmember followed by a presentation by Mayor Reed and a question and answer session with the Mayor. After the Mayor's presentation, the City Manager's Office walked through the proposed budget in more depth, including examples of bright spots of organizational innovation and positive change. In addition to the presentations, copies of the Budget in Brief were provided as a take away to give a more detailed explanation of each of the proposed changes in the Budget.

During the question and answer and discussion periods, representatives from the City Manager's Office, and the Police, Fire, Library, Transportation, and Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Departments were present to respond to specific questions or ideas.

## ANALYSIS

Though the topics of interest varied from district to district, overall a number of common themes emerged: public safety, roads, libraries, homeless encampments, services for youth, and bright spot innovations. Each of these themes is described below along with a count of how many times the subject was brought up in discussions. An illustrative Wordle is attached which shows approximately the top 70 words that were used by participants in the question and answer and discussion sections. In all, participants made over 220 comments at the meeting; the number of comments per topic is noted in parentheses below.

**Public Safety** (55 Comments)- Residents expressed frustration with increases in crime, in particular burglaries, where many residents related personal experiences with being victims of break-ins. This was the most discussed issue in most districts. Residents were for the most part eager to learn how to prevent crime and be involved as part of the solution.

**Roads** (24 Comments) - Another source of frustration was the deteriorating state of the roads. While there was general agreement on the poor condition of the roads, there were sharply divergent opinions about how to address the problem, ranging from a willingness to increase taxes specifically for roads to a desire to slash almost all other services to avoid paying higher taxes.

**Libraries** (15 Comments)- The question of Library hours, in particular the lack of Saturday service at half of the branches, came up in a number of meetings. Residents expressed the importance of Saturday hours, especially for working parents, and suggested a range of alternatives for opening more or different libraries on that day.

**Homeless Encampments** (11 Comments) - The problems of homeless encampments both for neighboring residents and the homeless themselves was brought up in several of the meetings. The importance of park rangers and trying to find a more permanent solution for homeless individuals were common to most discussions of this issue.

**Services for Youth** (18 Comments)- Services for youth, including gang prevention, came up regularly in meetings, both from residents and more often from members of non-profit organizations funded by the City to provide those services.

**Bright Spots** (18 Comments) - In reacting to the examples of innovation Bright Spots, residents were generally supportive of these changes, and in particular singled out the savings from the refinancing of City Hall and greater involvement of volunteers as things they would like to see the City do more of.

Additional areas that received comments included graffiti (13), and seniors (6) and a wide range of other items (61).

Overall it is clear that many San Jose residents are unsatisfied with existing levels of service, and want the City to do more to improve them. While there seemed to be wide support for use of technology and innovative approaches to service delivery, the issue of increasing taxes to support restoring service levels received decidedly mixed support.

Each and every one of the meetings provides a valuable opportunity for participating residents to both learn about the budget and contribute to its development. However, given the diminishing numbers of participants in these sessions, it may be time next year to consider alternative approaches for involving residents in the budget process.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

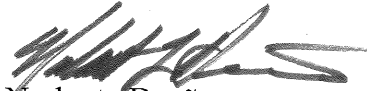
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**COORDINATION**

This memorandum was prepared in coordination with the Departments of Police, Fire, Library, Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, and Transportation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Norberto Dueñas", is positioned above the printed name.

Norberto Dueñas  
Deputy City Manager

Attachment

A word cloud of terms related to the San Jose Library Service. The words are arranged in a circular pattern. The largest words are 'City' and 'Need'. Other prominent words include 'people', 'budget', 'streets', 'police', 'libraries', 'roads', 'officers', 'go', 'open', 'back', 'community', 'safety', 'city', 'SPD', 'understand', 'Rock', 'parks', 'funds', 'area', 'just', 'increase', 'things', 'help', 'new', 'Service', 'work', 'young', 'cameras', 'money', 'programs', 'going', 'San', 'gang', 'station', 'time', 'see', 'issues', 'homeless', 'neighborhood', 'etc', 'look', 'public', 'school', 'calls', 'make', 'opening', 'year', 'two', 'graffiti', 'an', 'process', 'Homeless', 'increase', 'things', 'help', 'new', 'Service', 'work', 'young', 'cameras', 'money', 'programs', 'going', 'San', 'gang', 'station', 'time', 'see', 'issues', 'homeless', 'neighborhood', 'etc', 'look', 'public', 'school', 'calls', 'make', 'opening', 'year', 'two', 'graffiti', 'an', 'process', 'Homeless'.